

Visualhouse

(www.visualhouse.com.uk)

Autodesk® 3ds Max® software

We use 3ds Max intensely and constantly. It's the industry standard for 3D, and it is also the best. It is the only tool for Visualhouse.

—Robert Herrick
Owner and Founder
Visualhouse
London, UK

House of Visions.

Busy Visualhouse Uses Autodesk 3ds Max Software to Visualize the World.



Image courtesy of Visualhouse

Summary

Now boasting offices both in London and Shanghai, Visualhouse is a leading, and extremely busy, architectural visualization studio. Founded in 2003 by Robert Herrick, a graduate architect who developed a passion for 3D design and visualization, the company prides itself on providing compelling, accurate 3D imagery and animations for architects, developers, and advertising agencies worldwide. While the Visualhouse's projects are far-flung, ranging from Abu Dhabi to Russia, and from Grenada to Las Vegas, it has chosen Autodesk® 3ds Max® software for all of its 3D work, and from the very beginning of its business processes.

“We use 3ds Max intensely and constantly,” says Herrick matter-of-factly. “It’s the industry standard for 3D, and it is also the best. It is the only tool for Visualhouse.”

The Setup

When Robert Herrick started Visualhouse back in 2003, he could not have known how big the business would grow. Using 3ds Max for a streamlined workflow, Visualhouse currently handles some of the world’s largest architectural projects. Asked to name some of Visualhouse’s current and recent projects, Herrick produces a very long list, with development visions as grand as their exotic locales.

Working with prestigious architectural firms, including Foster and Partners, Kohn Pederson Fox, Be By Brigitta Spinocchia, HOK international, Allies and Morrison, Grimshaw Architects to name only a few, Visualhouse’s recent visualization projects include a massive new airport in Abu Dhabi, a luxurious resort on the Caribbean island of Grenada, and a complete, precise 3D model of Las Vegas, Nevada. However, the geographically disparate and divergent projects do have a common focal point; they are all being completed using Autodesk 3ds Max software.

While daunting in its complexity and size, the project was significantly eased and improved through use of mental ray, according to Herrick:

“We were able to work with mental ray very quickly, with only simple previous knowledge of that part of the software,” he says. “mental ray is fantastic for any animation of moving objects. We used the daylight system and standard cameras in 3ds Max, and were ready to roll in a couple of hours. The Foster’s team was amazed at how quickly we were able to turn the project around. mental ray was simply ideal.”

Autodesk®

You don't get much bigger than that.

Challenge: Grenada

Several more recent projects, with extraordinarily tight timelines, have also benefited from the latest version of Autodesk 3ds Max. For the luxury Levara Resort in Grenada, Herrick and the Visualhouse team needed to create eighteen photorealistic exterior images, with complete modeling and rendering, in just five days:

"We made great use of mental ray on Levara," says Herrick. "We created the still imagery and the subsequent animation in 3ds Max with mental ray. We wouldn't have been able to do this project without that combination. Batch rendering is a critical part of our workflow, and we were able to net render over 1000 frames overnight in a structured manner. It worked out really, really well."

Extremely large and pressure-filled projects also proceed much more smoothly nowadays, thanks in part to the interoperability of Autodesk products, according to Herrick:

"For large projects, companies will typically create their models in AutoCAD software, and then send it through to us in DWG format. We'll apply all of our textures, lighting, and so on. The great part is that, if they come back and want changes, we don't have to panic at all. We just use the File Link system to reupload the project. That is fantastic. On top of that, the 3ds Max toolset is just brilliant, not least because you weld vertices together with ease. The Spline tools are second-to-none."

Further Challenges

For a new and massive tower to be built in London by Foster and Partners, Visualhouse again found itself turning around a photorealistic strategic imagery in record time:

"Foster provided the model of this huge tower, but the rest of the scene and surrounding buildings were created using 3ds Max," says Herrick. "We needed to create a realistic, entirely accurate day shot and night shot of the same viewpoint, and we only had a week. With 3ds Max, we were able



Image courtesy of Visualhouse

to array office furniture, lights, people and more. That can take ages, but we were able to select and detach all the top floor plates, and then rearrange a selection of people and furniture models using the Scatter tool. Before we knew it, we had a fantastic looking, completely vibrant tower. That saved us an immense amount of time."

Moving Forward

And the projects seem to keep getting bigger in scope and size, causing Visualhouse to push its 3ds Max systems to the limit and beyond. The model for the new and massive Abu Dhabi airport (for Kohn Pederson Fox, London), for example, required all the power Visualhouse could spare:

"The airport model is so detailed that it was physically impossible to open or render the model using a regular computer," says Herrick. "We had to build a custom machine with 16 gigabytes of RAM, stripped down and only running 3ds Max 64-bit. That was just to open the model. It was amazing to use Max to that sort of degree, but that is how complex and sophisticated our projects are becoming. It's a good thing that we love the challenge."

The challenges seem certain to keep coming. From the oasis city in the desert of the United Arab Emirates, Visualhouse is also working on another such city in the desert of Nevada. Plans for the Ellis Las Vegas Gaming Resort called for a complete 3D model of infamous Las Vegas, NV which Visualhouse created using Autodesk 3ds Max 64-bit configuration.

"You don't get much bigger than that," says Herrick.

If Visualhouse's track record is any indication, however, it will likely find a way.

To learn more about 3ds Max, visit www.autodesk.com/3dsmax.



Image courtesy of Visualhouse

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